NUMB. CCCLXXIII.

The SPECTATOR.

——————Strabonem
Appellat pætum pater; & pullum, male parvus
Si cui filius eſt; ut abortivus fuit olim
Siſyphus: hunc varum, diſtortis cruribus; illum
Balbutit ſcaurum, pravis fultum malè talis. Hor.

Thurſday, May 8. 1712.

MR. *Lock*, in his Treatiſe of Human Underſtanding, has ſpent two Chapters upon the Abuſe of Words. The firſt and moſt palpable Abuſe of Words, he ſays, is, when they are uſed without clear and diſtinct Ideas. The ſecond, when we are ſo inconſtant and unſteady in the Application of them, that we ſometimes uſe them to ſignifie one Idea, ſometimes another. He adds, that the Reſult of our Contemplations and Reaſonings, while we have no preciſe Ideas fixed to our Words, muſt needs be very confuſed and abſurd. To avoid this Inconvenience, more eſpecially in Moral Diſcourſes, where the ſame Word ſhould conſtantly be uſed in the ſame Senſe, he earneſtly recommends the uſe of Definitions. *A Definition*, ſays he, *is the only way whereby the preciſe meaning of Moral Words can be known.* He therefore accuſes thoſe of great Negligence who diſcourſe of Moral things with the leaſt Obſcurity in the Terms they make uſe of, ſince upon the foremention'd Ground he does not ſcruple to ſay that he thinks *Morality is capable of Demonſtration as well as the Mathematicks.*

I know no two Words which have been more abuſed by the different and wrong Interpretations which are put upon them, than thoſe two, *Modeſty* and *Aſſurance*. To ſay ſuch an one is *a modeſt Man*, ſometimes indeed paſſes for a good Character; but at preſent is very often uſed to ſignifie a ſheepiſh, awkard Fellow, who has neither Good-breeding, Politeneſs, nor any Knowledge of the World.

Again, *A Man of Aſſurance*, tho' at firſt it only denoted a Perſon of a free and open Carriage, is now very uſually applied to a profligate Wretch, who can break through all the Rules of Decency and Morality without a Bluſh.

I ſhall endeavour therefore in this Eſſay to reſtore theſe Words to their true Meaning, to prevent the Idea of *Modeſty* from being confounded with that of *Sheepiſhneſs*, and to hinder *Impudence* from paſſing for *Aſſurance*.

If I was put to define *Modeſty*, I would call it *The Reflection of an Ingenuous Mind, either when a Man has committed an Action for which he Cenſures himſelf, or fancies that he is expoſed to the Cenſure of others.*

For this Reaſon a Man truly Modeſt is as much ſo when he is alone, as in Company; and as ſubject to a Bluſh in his Cloſet, as when the Eyes of Multitudes are upon him.

I do not remember to have met with any Inſtance of Modeſty with which I am ſo well pleaſed, as that celebrated one of the young Prince, whoſe Father being a Tributary King to the *Romans*, had ſeveral Complaints laid againſt him before the Senate, as a Tyrant and Oppreſſor of his Subjects. The Prince went to *Rome* to defend his Father; but coming into the Senate, and hearing a multitude of Crimes proved upon him, was ſo oppreſſed when it came to his turn to ſpeak, that he was unable to utter a Word. The Story tells us, that the Fathers were more moved at this Inſtance of Modeſty and Ingenuity, than they could have been by the moſt Pathetick Oration; and, in ſhort, pardoned the Guilty Father for this early Promiſe of Virtue in the Son.

I take *Aſſurance* to be *The Faculty of poſſeſſing a Man's ſelf*, or *of ſaying and doing indifferent things without any Uneaſineſs or Emotion in the Mind.* That which generally gives a Man Aſſurance is a moderate Knowledge of the World, but above all a Mind fixed and determined in it ſelf to do nothing againſt the Rules of Honour and Decency. An open and aſſured Behaviour is the natural Conſequence of ſuch a Reſolution. A Man thus armed, if his Words or Actions are at any time miſinterpreted, retires within himſelf, and from a Conſciouſneſs of his own Integrity aſſumes Force enough to deſpiſe the little Cenſures of Ignorance or Malice.

Every one ought to cheriſh and encourage in himſelf the Modeſty and Aſſurance I have here mentioned.

A Man without Aſſurance is lyable to be made uneaſie by the Folly or Ill-nature of every one he converſes with. A Man without Modeſty is loſt to all Senſe of Honour and Virtue.

It

It is more than probable that the Prince abovementioned poſſeſſed both theſe Qualifications in a very eminent degree. Without Aſſurance he would never have undertaken to ſpeak before the moſt auguſt Aſſembly in the World: Without Modeſty he would have pleaded the Cauſe he had taken upon him, tho' it had appeared never ſo Scandalous.

From what has been ſaid it is plain, that Modeſty and Aſſurance are both amiable, and may very well meet in the ſame Perſon. When they are thus mixed and blended together they compoſe what we endeavour to expreſs when we ſay *a modeſt Aſſurance*; by which we underſtand the Juſt Mean between Baſhfulneſs and Impudence.

I ſhall conclude, with obſerving, that as the ſame Man may be both Modeſt and Aſſured, ſo it is alſo poſſible for the ſame Perſon to be both Impudent and Baſhful.

We have frequent Inſtances of this odd kind of Mixture in People of depraved Minds and mean Education; who tho' they are not able to meet a Man's Eyes, or pronounce a Sentence without Confuſion, can voluntarily commit the greateſt Villanies, or moſt Indecent Action

Such a Perſon ſeems to have made a Reſolution to do Ill even in ſpite of himſelf, and in defiance of all thoſe Checks and Reſtraints his Tempet and Complection ſeem to have laid in his way.

Upon the whole, I would endeavour to eſtabliſh this Maxim, That the Practice of *Virtue* is the moſt proper Method to give a Man a becoming Aſſurance in his Words and Actions. *Guilt* always ſeeks to ſhelter it ſelf in one of the Extreams; and is ſometimes attended with both.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

For the Benefit of Mr. Keene.

At the Deſire of ſeveral Ladies of Quality.

By Her Majeſty's Company of Comedians,

AT the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane, this preſent Thurſday, the 8th Day of May, will be Preſented a Play call'd, The Mourning Bride. The Part of the Mourning-Bride by Mrs. Bradſhaw, the King by Mr. Keene, Oſmin by Mr. Booth, and all the other Parts to the beſt Advantage. By her Majeſty's Command no Perſons are to be admitted behind the Scenes. And to morrow, being Friday, will be preſented a Play call'd Venice Preſerved, or a Plot diſcovered, for the Benefit of Mrs. Rogers.

Never Performed but Twice.

AT the Queen's Theatre in the Hay-Market, on Saturday next being the 10th Day of May, will be preſented a new Opera call'd Hercules. The Boxes 8 s. Pit 5 s. Firſt Gallery 2 s. 6 d. Upper Gallery 1 s. 6 d. Boxes upon the Stage Half a Guinea. To begin at half an hour after ſeven, the Entertainment being ſhort. By her Majeſty's Command no Perſons are to be admitted behind the Scenes.

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At Stationer's Hall near Ludgate, on Wedneſday the 14th Inſtant, will be performed all the Muſick, both Vocal and Inſtrumental, in the Opera of Diocleſian; Compoſed by the Immortal Henry Purcell; which, for the Beauty of Expreſſion, Excellency of Harmony, and Grandeur of Contrivance, gives a firſt place to no Muſical Opera in Europe. For the Benefit of Mr. Smith and Mr. Cuthbert. Beginning at 6 a Clock. Tickets are deliver'd at Garraways and Will's Coffee-houſes in Cornhil; Sam's in Ludgate-ſtreet; St. James's and Smyrna at St. James's; the Britiſh and Young Man's at Charing-Croſs; at the Tilt-yard at Whitehall; at Tom's and Will's in Covent-Garden, and at the Hall, at 5 s. each. N. B. The Tickets deliver'd for the 9th of April will be taken this Day.

This Day in the Afternoon is to be Sold by Auction at Exeter Exchange in the Strand, a curious Collection of Phyſical Books, being the Library of a late eminent Phyſician; beginning at 5 a-Clock exactly.

This Day and the two following Days, from 8 in the Morning till 8 at Night, at a Brokers Shop the Corner of New-Round-Court, over againſt York Buildings in the Strand, will be Sold by Written Catalogues, and the loweſt price ſet in the firſt Leaf of every Book, A Collection of Valuable Books in moſt Faculties, viz. Divinity, Hiſtory, Philoſophy, Law, Mathematicks, Lives, Poetry, Plays, &c. Some alſo in Greek, Latin, French and Italian. A large pair of Globes, and choice Collection of Maps, Atlaſſes, Fox's Martyrs large Paper the beſt.

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